

Regarding natality, the decision was made to present age-specific (ages 15-44 and 15-19) rather than age-adjusted rates. Either age-specific or age-adjusted rates are required because minority populations are much younger than Whites; thus, comparisons of crude rates among the races would be misleading in terms of relative risk.

For the population-based rates of this report, the population bases represent straight-line interpolations/extrapolations of the 1980 and 1990 censuses since intercensal population estimates are not produced for Native Americans. The census figures used for this purpose are from the 100-percent tabulations; other census results cited in this report may represent sample tabulations.

In the section on pregnancy and infant health, live births for 1990 and 1991 use the definition of a newborn's race as that of its mother. Prior to 1990 for North Carolina (1989 for the U.S.), the darker of the mother's and father's race (if different) was ascribed to the newborn at birth. For infant deaths, race of the decedent is that recorded on the death certificate.

In some of the tables of this report, data are shown separately for Native Americans residing in reservation and nonreservation counties; the former consist of Graham, Jackson, and Swain counties, home of the federally recognized Eastern Cherokee Reservation. Some tables also include data for 17 counties having sizable Native American populations (500 or more in 1990). In using these data for reservation and other selected counties, the user should keep in mind the statistical problem of small numbers of events; many of the rates or percentages may be associated with large random errors.

Small numbers and unrepresentativeness of Indian events preclude the use of some data that will appear in the corresponding report for Blacks. For example, 1990 cancer incidence reports to the Central Cancer Registry included only 85 Indian cases, Cumberland and Guilford counties did not report cancer incidence data, and Cherokee Indian Hospital appears to have underreported. Although attempts were made to obtain all hospital discharge data for Cherokee Indian Hospital, those data were not obtainable within the time frame of this report.

Throughout this report, reference is made to those Year 2000 national health objectives that are specific for Native Americans.⁴ Although some of those may not be entirely appropriate for North Carolina, they at least identify areas in which North Carolina needs to examine available data. A complete list of the national objectives for Native Americans is found in Appendix 1.

A final note is that this report generally does not include trend data. This decision was based on the data problems associated with changing race-identity patterns and related inconsistencies between numerators and denominators over time. While these problems may not greatly affect the numbers and population-based rates for Whites and Blacks, they could definitely bias the data for American Indians, much of which is already subject to substantial random fluctuation.

Definitions for a number of the terms used in this report are found in the Glossary beginning on page 17. Note the race definitions on page 19 and that the terms "American Indian," "Indian," and "Native American" are used interchangeably in this report.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

At the time of the 1990 census, residents reporting race as Native American (American Indian) numbered 79,825 and represented 1.2 percent of the total N.C. population. Fifty-one percent lived in Robeson County and accounted for 39 percent of that county's population. Another eight percent lived in the Cherokee Reservation counties of Graham, Jackson, and Swain. Other counties with sizable Native American populations include Columbus, Cumberland, Guilford, Halifax, Hoke, Mecklenburg, Scotland, and Wake.

The previously cited report¹ examines a variety of census data for race and Hispanic subgroups of the state's population. For Blacks and Native Americans, health-related indicators from the 1990 census and the corresponding percent changes since 1980 are compared to those for Whites. Among the findings for Native Americans are these: